

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT
PCT/IB2003/00688, filed February 25, 2003

REMARKS

The new claims 16-35 take into consideration the prior art cited in the International Search Report, and also the European examiner's "Arguments" (an English translation of the relevant portions of which is enclosed for the Examiner's consideration). Since Applicant believes that European examiner's rejection may have been based on a misunderstanding of the European claims, Applicant submits these new claims 16-35 in an attempt to make clear the invention intended to be claimed.

I. Support in the application as filed regarding the new claims:

1. Claim 16 :

New claim 16 concerns an assembly comprising an object (100) and a support (204) removably connected to each other so as to pivot with respect to each other – specification page 1, paragraph 1. The support is connected to the object by the way of a fixing element (203) mounted on the support – page 2, last paragraph and page 3, line 15 – and defining a pivot axis – "pivoting points" are mentioned on page 2, line 38 to page 3, first line, a pivot axis containing these pivoting points being deducible from the drawing figures.

The support, in particular – page 1, line 37 –, may be pivoted in order to present alternately a first face and a second face – page 2, line 1 and page 3, lines 1 to 4 – a mid-plane being deducible from the drawing figures, in particular Figs. 5 and 11, this mid-plane being intrinsically located between the two support faces in the vicinity of the fixing element. The

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support presents one or the other of its faces when the assembly is arranged in a first or second stable position.

The fixing element (203) has a pivot (202) – page 3, lines 15, 16 – comprising a body (211), connected to the support (204), and a base (210) formed at its free end – page 5, lines 13 to 16, in connection with Figures 5 and 11.

A cavity (120, 121) is formed on the object and comprises a first opening (130, 131) continued by an elongate second opening (140, 141) – page 5, lines 7 to 11 – extending transversely with respect to the direction of the pivot axis and parallel to the mid-plane, previously defined, in a stable position – Figures 1 and 8.

These Figures 1 and 8, as well as Figure 4, show that the two "parts" (120) and (130) of the cavity are in fact openings of this cavity toward the outside of the object. Thus, the word "opening", instead of the word "part", has been used "to clarify the subject matter of claim 16.

The first opening is designed to allow the base to be inserted into the cavity – page 5, line 13 – while the second opening is designed to guide pivot (202) and permit a relative movement of the object and of the support, to bring them to a stable position – page 5, lines 14 to 16 and page 6, lines 23 to 37.

The support (204) further comprises retractable locking means (200, 205) designed to engage with matching cavities (150, 153) in a stable position – see page 6, lines 35 to 37, original claim 6, as well as Figure 10, together with Figure 1, and Figure 12 together with Figure 8, concerning the locking means. The wording "locking means" replaces the wording "fixing

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means" of original claim 6, in order to clarify the meaning of the claim as regards the several uses of the word "fixing" throughout the specification in connection with distinct structural parts of the assembly. The same applies to the wording "stable position" as regards the wording "fixed position" of specification page 2, lines 11, 12.

Thus, the subject-matter of new claim 16 is fully supported by the disclosure of the application as filed.

2. Dependent claims :

New claim 17 further specifies the structure of the retractable locking means (200, 205), this being supported by the passage of the specification on page 5, lines 18 to 20.

New claim 18 further specifies the orientation of the retractable locking means (200, 205) according to the embodiment corresponding to Figure 8 together with Figure 12, in connection with the passage of page 5, from line 28 to line 32.

The subject matter of new claims 19 to 21 corresponds to the general embodiment of the present invention as represented in the drawing and described in the application as filed; see page 3, lines 15 to 21, for a supporting disclosure of new claim 19.

New claims 22 and 23 further specify the orientation of the retractable locking means (200, 205) according to the embodiment corresponding to Figures 1, 10 and 11, considered together, in connection with page 5, lines 18 to 20.

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New claims 24 and 25 specify the central position of the pivot axis regarding pivoting of the strap and of the watch case with respect to each other. This central position is apparent from the drawing, in particular Figures 1 and 11, and is deducible from page 5, line 35, where a "central orifice (500)" is mentioned in connection with the strap.

New claims 26 to 30 relate to the specific embodiment wherein the watch case comprises two middles joined together, thus corresponding to Figure 1 and specification page 5, lines 1 to 5.

New claims 31 to 33 relate to a particular embodiment wherein a plate (600) is used to form a cavity (120, 121), this plate being mounted on the watch case as shown in Figures 3 and 6 and described on page 5, lines 22 to 26.

New claims 34 and 35 recite a preferred method of mounting plate (600) on object (100), this method being screwing as represented in Figure 3.

Thus, the subject-matter of each of the new claims 16-35 is supported by the application as filed.

II. Patentability:

1. Novelty:

Claim 16:

The preamble of new claim 16 relates to an assembly comprising an object and a support removably connected to each other by a fixing element mounted on the support and defining a pivot axis about which the object and the support are able to pivot with respect to each other.

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More particularly, the assembly is arranged for enabling the support to pivot with respect to the object to present alternately a first face and a second face in a stable position. Furthermore, when the support is in such a stable position, its two faces define a mid-plane of the support in the vicinity of the fixing element.

The above defined subject matter substantially corresponds to the disclosure of CH 674 291 and GB 2 213 612, both cited in the International Search Report.

However, the additional features recited in the remainder of new claim 16 render the subject matter of this claim distinctive and novel relative to these two prior art documents (as well as to the other documents cited in the International Search Report).

Indeed, none of these documents teaches or suggests a cavity formed in the object, such cavity having a "first opening", arranged for the insertion of part (base) of the fixing element, and "being continued by an elongate second opening...designed to guide" the fixing element "and permit a relative movement of said object and of said support to bring them to a stable position". Furthermore, none of these documents teaches or suggests, in combination with the above features, "retractable locking means designed to engage with matching cavities" in the stable positions.

Consequently, the subject-matter of new independent claim 16 is novel with respect to the prior art cited in the International Search Report.

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Claims 17 to 35:

Claims 17 to 35 depend on new claim 16, and their respective subject matters comprise additional novel features combined with those of claim 16.

Thus, the aforementioned reasons apply in a similar manner to dependent claims 17 to 35, the respective subject matters of which are new with respect to the prior art cited in the International Search Report.

2. Inventive step/Non-obviousness:

Claim 16 :

The respective devices, described in the previously discussed two patent documents cited in the ISR, are considered to represent the closest prior art for the subject-matter of new claim 16. Indeed, these devices have similar structures and aim at solving a same technical problem, i.e., providing, between an object and a support, a connection that is removable and pivoting at the same time.

Generally, one skilled in the art may be considered as being a manufacturer of watch exterior elements, such as watch cases, dials, straps, etc...

Assuming that the closest prior art is either GB 2 213 612 or CH 674 291, a same technical problem may be defined, consisting of improving a removable and pivoting connection between an object and a support by providing means to increase the stability of positions in which the corresponding assembly is intended to be used by its wearer.

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In order to solve this problem, one skilled in the art would consider combining the teaching of CH 659 167, i.e., retractable balls, with either of the above devices. Hence, such a combination would **not** lead one skilled in the art to Applicant's invention as claimed in new claim 16, as the latter requires an open cavity (120, 121) formed in the object and, the orientation of which is specific. More particularly, the second opening of this cavity, as previously mentioned, extends "transversely with respect to the direction of said pivot axis and parallel to said mid-plane in a stable position".

Such a feature is advantageous in that it ensures a better tightening of the support with the object, thus avoiding inopportune separation of these two parts of the assembly. Indeed, in the case of the wristwatch disclosed in GB 2 213 612, the movement to be imparted, to remove the strap from the watch case, takes place in a longitudinal mid-plane of the strap, i.e., in a plane perpendicular to the strap faces. Thus, it is probable that, under actual wear conditions in which the watch case is not always centered on the wearer's wrist, the angle between the watch case and the strap may be close to the necessary angle to remove the strap from the watch case. As a consequence, a shock may be sufficient then to make the strap inopportunistly detach from the watch case. Such a situation may lead to a fall of the watch or to its loss.

Thanks to the **specific orientation** of its opening, the cavity according to Applicant's claimed invention provides a better security level for the connection of the strap to the watch case.

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None of the documents cited in the International Search Report either mentions or even suggests such an orientation.

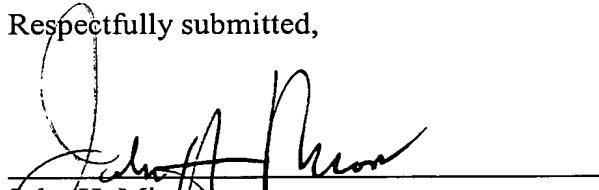
As a consequence, the subject-matter of new claim 16 is inventive and non-obvious.

Claims 17 to 35:

Claims 17 to 35 depend on new claim 16, and their respective subject matters comprise additional non-obvious features when combined with those of parent claim 16.

Thus, the aforementioned reasons apply in a similar manner to claims 17 to 35, the respective subject matters of which are inventive and non-obvious with respect to the prior art cited in the International Search Report.

Respectfully submitted,



John H. Mion
Registration No. 18,879

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC
2100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037-3213
(202) 663-7901

WASHINGTON OFFICE
23373
CUSTOMER NUMBER

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